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President:	Mr. Skoog	(Sweden)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Soliz
	China	Mr. Shen Bo
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Italy	Mr. Cardi
	Japan	Mr. Okamura
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Tumysh
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
	United States of America	Ms. Coleman
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli

Agenda

The situation in Mali

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali (S/2016/1137)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Expression of sympathy in connection with the terrorist attack in Gao, Mali

The President: I want to begin by acknowledging the heinous attack on the Operational Coordination Mechanism in Gao, Mali. I express the Council's deepest condolences and sympathy to the families of the victims, the Government of Mali and the signatory parties of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, and wish a rapid and full recovery to the injured. In view of the agenda for today's meeting, I am certain that the Council will revert to the issue.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Mali

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali (S/2016/1137)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Mali to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Abdoulaye Diop, Minister for Foreign Affairs, African Integration and International Cooperation of the Republic of Mali.

Also in accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, and considering Algeria's role as Chair of the Comité de suivi de l'accord, I invite the representative of Algeria to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome Mr. Sabri Boukadoum, Permanent Representative of Algeria.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Hervé Ladsous, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2016/1137, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali.

I now give the floor to Mr. Ladsous.

Mr. Ladsous (*spoke in French*): I am grateful for this opportunity to present the latest report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali (S/2016/1137) to the members of the Security Council, and to review with them the most recent developments in the country.

I welcome the Minister for Foreign Affairs, African Integration and International Cooperation of the Republic of Mali, Mr. Abdoulaye Diop, and thank him for the Government of Mali's ongoing support for the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). I also welcome the representative of Algeria, a leader in international mediation, for his tireless commitment to the promotion of the peace process in Mali.

Before beginning my briefing, I would like to pay tribute to the victims of the dreadful suicide attack on the Operational Coordination Mechanism camp in Gao. We offer our condolences to the families of the victims, to the Government of Mali and to the parties to the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. As the Secretary-General notes in his report, the perpetrators of the heinous attack must be identified and brought to justice as soon as possible.

We are trying to better understand the situation. What we do know is that a car bomb exploded at around 9 a.m. inside the Operational Coordination Mechanism camp, where close to 600 troops of the Platform coalition of armed groups, the Mechanism and the Malian armed forces had been stationed for the past three weeks in preparation for joint patrols. The explosion caused heavy casualties. An initial assessment puts the death toll at over 60, with several dozen wounded — some critically so. MINUSMA, Operation Barkhane and the Malian armed forces are currently working as hard as possible to assist the victims and secure the town of Gao.

We condemn with the utmost firmness this cowardly and ignoble attack, which constitutes a direct attack on the peace process. It was clearly aimed at derailing the peace process by undermining trust between the signatory parties and the people, as well as at countering the recent progress in the implementation of the security arrangements of the peace Agreement. This incident highlights once again the fact that an acceleration in the implementation of the Agreement is the only possible way to stabilize Mali and to bring the peace process to fruition. I reiterate that time is against us, and the United Nations remains more than ever

deeply committed to supporting the Government of Mali and the signatory parties in the speediest possible implementation of the Agreement.

We have reached a pivotal moment. I recall that the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali was signed more than 18 months ago, while the interim period was intended to last 24 months. In other words, more than 18 months have passed yet, despite some advances, too little progress has been recorded. It must be said that since the last Council meeting on Mali (see S/PV.7801), the implementation of interim institutional and security arrangements has basically stagnated and remains undermined by persistent disagreements and a lack of trust among the signatory parties. We note the recent heightened fragmentation of armed groups, particularly within the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad, and the repeated attempts of dissident groups to disrupt the peace process, all of hampers the implementation of the Agreement. I must stress that only five months remain until the end of the interim period. The absence of tangible results is of major concern and leads me to question the real will and commitment of the signatories of the peace process.

As I have said, there has been some progress. For instance, following the ministerial meeting on the peace Agreement held in the margins of the General Assembly in New York in September, armed groups finally submitted, after a year's delay, the lists containing their candidates for the Operational Coordination Mechanism, the interim authorities, the Commission on Integration and the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission. Since then, however, every attempt to implement joint patrols has failed, mainly because of disputes among the signatory parties on logistical and financial issues. As a result, we have made insufficient progress. It was only after intense negotiations and thanks to the good offices of MINUSMA, international mediation and the High Representative of the President of the Republic of Mali for the implementation of the peace Agreement that the armed forces of Mali and the armed groups are now regrouped at Gao for the launch of the long-awaited mixed patrols. Clearly, we must wait and see what consequences this morning's tragedy may have.

Similarly, the rivalry among armed groups over the presidency of the interim authorities in Kidal has so far prevented their establishment. I was in Kidal in May last year, where I met with the Governor-designate, who told me that he would assume his functions within a week. That was in May, while it is now January of the following year. All this endless delay is deeply regrettable and hinders the cantonment, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process. All eight cantonment sites that have been built and equipped with the support of MINUSMA have been fully operational but remained essential empty since October. Some institutional and political reforms are required but have yet to be transformed into action. The definition of criteria for the integration of ex-combatants, security sector reform and the redeployment strategy of the Malian defence and security forces has yet to be finalized by the Government. Similarly, an inclusive and long-term dialogue on the restoration of State authority and institutional reforms is necessary if these reforms are to bring real change.

One of the pillars of the MINUSMA mandate, a cornerstone of resolution 2295 (2016), is the restoration and extension of State authority across all Mali. In this regard, the Mission supported the Government in the preparation of the local elections of 20 November. These were the first elections held since 2009, and unfolded in 92 per cent of the municipalities of Mali. Unfortunately, they did not take place in the Kidal, Ménaka and Taoudenni regions, or in certain localities of Gao, Mopti and Timbuktu, due to security incidents and impediments to voting. On the eve of the elections, armed groups and opposition parties repeatedly expressed their objections to the organization of elections, which they believed should take place only after the establishment of the interim authorities.

Let us not forget, however, that 2017 is to be an important year for regional elections and a constitutional referendum in Mali. All stakeholders must therefore strive to find common ground, and we count on the Government to ensure that these elections are held in an open and inclusive environment that will contribute to reconciliation. One key point that must be stressed is the election of many women, who now represent nearly 30 per cent of elected municipal councilors in Timbuktu, Gao and Bamako.

The announcement by President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita in September 2016 of the convening of a national reconciliation conference — now scheduled for March under the auspices of the Minister for Foreign Affairs — could offer a genuinely inclusive forum to address all the root causes of the crisis and involve all components of Malian society in order to map a path towards national reconciliation. I welcome the

appointment of the Ombudsman of Mali, Mr. Baba Hakim Haïdara, to lead the preparatory committee, and hope that this important conference can be held by the deadline that has been set.

However, this morning's tragedy demonstrates the extent to which the terrorist phenomenon is becoming more and more disturbing in northern and central Mali, as well as in the subregion. While the number of attacks on the Malian armed forces, MINUSMA and international forces has declined over the past three months, their level of sophistication remains a cause for growing concern. Complex attacks on our air capacities have grounded some of our helicopters and impeded their operational capability. We need to consider this situation in depth, because if the security situation continues to deteriorate at the current pace there will soon be no peace to maintain in Mali. We must condemn such attacks and be aware of their regional dimensions, including recent lethal attacks on security forces in the Niger and Burkina Faso close to the Malian border. All of this highlights the imperative role of the regional partners in the peace process and in the work of MINUSMA. As called for in the resolution, we continue to work to strengthen links with the member countries of the Group of Five for the Sahel.

The Council also called on us to adopt a more robust and proactive stance to protect civilians suffering from the deteriorating security situation. However, the only viable solution to that problem is the redeployment of the Malian defence and security forces to the north and the centre of the country. A frank and constructive dialogue must then begin on the impact of drug trafficking and other transnational crimes on security and the peace process.

In spite of the sustained efforts, we still face significant capacity gaps — including helicopters and other aircraft, armoured vehicles, logistical support and protective gear — that hinder our ability to implement our mandate. We are in constant contact with troop- and police-contributing countries, which we thank for the capacities they provide. I think that, more than evert, a determined, additional effort is needed to close the gaps.

It is of paramount importance to restore the confidence of the Malian population. The window of opportunity to generate tangible peace dividends on the ground is closing. We continue to receive reports of serious violations of human rights by armed groups, and sometimes by State actors. The Government has in the past done little to combat impunity. Above all for people in the north of Mali, things are slow to change. A lack of basic social services along with food insecurity and chronic poverty all contribute to hindering trust from taking hold and becoming entrenched. The implementation of the development strategy for the north has not yet begun, more than a year after the international conference for the economic recovery and development of Mali. It is imperative that armed groups put an end to their obstruction of humanitarian access, while the Government and its partners must work more closely together to create the conditions for sustainable prosperity and growth in order remedy a situation in which millions of young Malians are still living under very precarious conditions.

The Government of Mali, with the support of MINUSMA, has developed indicators of progress that have been annexed to the Secretary-General's report. They will serve as a working and dialogue tool for a more systematic assessment of the progress made by the parties in Mali in the implementation of the peace Agreement. However, the indicators must be met, that is, they must help to address all the shortcomings I mentioned. I would call on the members of the international mediation to redouble their efforts to re-energize the Agreement's follow-up mechanisms.

On the margins of the fourth high-level seminar on peace and security, held in Oran in December with the African Union and Algerian Foreign Minister Ramtane Lamamra, we discussed the need for a high-level meeting of the international mediation, which I think should be held as soon as possible. We must also continue to focus on establishing a common vision of how to deal with dissident groups. I believe that the members of the Security Council must not forget that they have the option of imposing targeted measures against all those who violate the ceasefire and deliberately hamper the peace process.

Please forgive me for going on at such length. I regret that, unfortunately, the circumstances have impacted the tone and tenor of my briefing. I really wanted to convey to the Council a sense of urgency about the worrying state of the peace process in Mali. But it nevertheless remains the only possible avenue for achieving peace and reconciliation. Everyone must be fully committed to the implementation of the peace Agreement. There is not much time left.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Ladsous for his briefing.

(*spoke in English*)

The representative of Uruguay has asked for the floor to make a statement.

Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): Uruguay believes that, as an elected member of the Security Council, it is part of its duty to share with the overall membership its views on the various items considered by the Council.

I thank Mr. Hervé Ladsous, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, for his comprehensive briefing today, which was generally in line with various views of my delegation.

We regret to note that the situation in Mali continues to deteriorate more and more. We resolutely condemn the cowardly suicide attack today that left a toll of dozens of killed or injured.

I find it pertinent to focus on setting out our positions on some practical aspects as to what we should do.

First of all, Uruguay wishes to reiterate the crucial importance of implementing the peace Agreement in order to arrive at a lasting political solution to the conflict and achieve peace and stability in Mali, for ultimately political primacy falls to the national authorities. The United Nations and other international bodies can only support and facilitate the national commitment to peace. The main task in any undertaking for peace is to provide support to national stakeholders in order to restore peace. However, in no circumstance can that support take on the responsibilities that fall on countries as sovereign States.

It is imperative that the parties to the Agreement for peace and reconciliation in Mali be urged to honour their political commitments. It is necessary that there be willingness among the signatory parties to abide by the Agreement' provisions and meet the timelines that have been established. Until what was agreed between the Government, the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad and the Platform is fully implemented, it will be impossible to move forward in any other area that could yield peace dividends for Mali's population.

Uruguay joins the Secretary-General in congratulating the Government of Mali on having held the first local elections since 2009, while also not overlooking the difficulties encountered in some regions where the process could not be completed. We are aware that there are challenges and that regional elections and the constitutional referendum are approaching. It will be important that the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the international community provide the necessary support to the Government of Mali so that those polls can take place successfully.

Secondly, also in line with the previous point, the security situation will improve only when progress is made with regard to the extension of State authority throughout the country's territory. All of us here have seen how the terrorism threat spreads and thrives in places where State authority is lax or non-existent. As long as the parties continue to face off and do not meet their commitments, terrorist groups will find a conducive space to continue to expand — at the cost of suffering for peacekeepers and Mali's armed forces, as well, even worse, at the cost of the lives of a large number of civilians.

Thirdly, we would like to refer to the possibility of taking coercive measures in the face of this reality. In resolution 2295 (2016) the Council expressed its readiness to consider imposing targeted sanctions against those who take steps to hinder or jeopardize the implementation of the Agreement, renew hostilities or violate the ceasefire, attack or make efforts to undermine MINUSMA and other international presences or support such attacks and actions. The Secretary-General himself has asked the Security Council to consider adopting such measures. In that regard, it will be up to the Council to evaluate the real impact of such measures on the ground as their eventual contribution to achieve the effective implementation of the peace Agreement.

In conclusion, Uruguay reiterates once again that the current mandate of MINUSMA exceeds what was envisaged for the running of a peacekeeping operation to include the carrying out of activities to fight terrorism. Uruguay voted in favour of resolution 2295 (2016) because it believed that Mali's security situation was extraordinary, but that this type of activity should not be replicated in future peacekeeping operations.

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and African Integration of the Republic of Mali.

Mr. Diop (Mali) (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin, Mr. President, by offering you my congratulations and those of the Malian delegation on the accession of your country, Sweden, to the presidency of the Security Council for the month of January 2017. The people and the Government of Mali greatly appreciate the contribution of Sweden to the stabilization efforts of my country. At the same time, I would like to express our great appreciation to the delegation of the Kingdom of Spain for the outstanding work it did during its presidency of the Council last month. Allow me also to thank the Secretary-General of our Organization, Mr. António Guterres, for his vision of the United Nations and for his renewed commitment to support the ongoing peace process in Mali, which is a guarantee of lasting stability in our region. I extend once again the best wishes of the President of the Republic of Mali, His Excellency Mr. Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, to Mr. Guterres for success in his new role.

Before going further, I would also like to wish the new members of the Security Council every success and to assure them of the full cooperation of the Mali delegation here in New York. I would also like to welcome the presence here today of the Ambassador of Algeria, whose country, headed by His Excellency Mr. Abdelaziz Bouteflika, played an extremely important role in restoring peace and stability in Mali, and I want to thank Algeria also for all the sacrifices it has made for peace in Mali and for stability in our region.

The peace process in Mali is difficult, complex and marked by many obstacles. This morning, the Malian people were once again torn apart by a suicide attack, as was mentioned earlier, against the cantonment site of the Operational Coordination Mechanism in Gao, which is one of the mechanisms provided for in the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, an outcome of the Algiers process. Unfortunately, the attack caused dozens of deaths, more than 60 wounded and significant material damage. As we wait to know the exact circumstances of this criminal, cowardly and barbaric attack on elements of the Malian armed forces, elements of the Platform coalition of armed groups as well as elements of the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad, grouped together for the launch of mixed patrols, the Government of Mali immediately and firmly condemned the attack and expressed its deep condolences to the bereaved families and wished a quick recovery to all the wounded. The Government also delared three days of national mourning. The perpetrators and accomplices of this criminal attack will be prosecuted and brought to justice. This point was made earlier by Under-Secretary-General Hervé Ladsous. It is very clearly an attack whose sole objective is to undermine peace, focusing as it did on stakeholders in this same peace.

I believe that it is in these most difficult of times that Malians, be they from the north, the south, the east or the west of the country, come together in their mourning and renew their determination to continue defending and promoting peace wherever it is necessary. This attack must therefore not distract us from our desire to move forward, promote peace and refute the will of those who only want to sabotage the peace process. I wish to repeat it once again: the Government of Mali remains committed to implementing the peace Agreement and to fulfilling all its commitments, because this Agreement, as it was again brought to our attention this morning, is the only framework today that allows us to bring peace and stability back to our country.

The delegation of Mali takes note of the report (S/2016/1137) of the Secretary-General under consideration and congratulates the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Mahamat Saleh Annadif, on the contribution of his Office in preparing it. We would more particularly like to congratulate and thank Under-Secretary-General Ladsous for the excellent introduction he has just made of the contents of the report. I am pleased that the report acknowledges the progress made by Mali in the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation, highlighting the efforts made by the Government of Mali under the leadership of President Keita, whose commitment and determination in the implementation of the Agreement cannot be questioned, and this I repeat once more before you and the Council, Mr. President.

The Government of Mali is also of the view that restoring State authority throughout the country remains an important challenge to be addressed in order to put an end to the security vacuum and the absence of administration, which is an essential condition for the provision of basic social services to Malian populations in need. Furthermore, the Government of Mali shares the Secretary-General's view that the situation in the centre and north of the country remains worrisome owing to the persistence of asymmetric attacks by terrorist and extremist groups against the civilian

population, the Malian security and defence forces and international forces. These factors constitute the main obstacles to the implementation of the Agreement, as called for on all the parties involved in the process, both the Malian parties and the international community symbolized by this body.

The security situation in the centre of the country is of concern to the Government of Mali, which is carrying out several initiatives to contain the terrorist threat, promote coexistence and national reconciliation between the nomadic and settled populations, but also to take into account the aspirations of young people in the centre of the country within the framework of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) process.

The Government of Mali, under the authority of President Keita, is aware of the impatience of Mali's partners with regard to the delay in the implementation of certain provisions of the Agreement. However, cognizant of its commitments under the Agreement, the Government side has spared no effort in intensifying its actions over the past three months to advance the peace process. That determination has yielded excellent results despite the very difficult context. Accordingly, under the rubric of institutional policy reform and in accordance with the relevant provisions of the peace Agreement, the process of constitutional reform is well under way. A draft revised constitution, which is now ready, has been submitted to a series of consultations with political parties, signatory armed groups, civil society organizations and traditional leaders. After its adoption by the national representatives, the revised constitution will be submitted for the approval of the Malian people by referendum, which is scheduled for later this year.

Similarly, the Government has appointed the members of the interim authorities and transitional electoral colleges, as well as special advisers to State representatives in the northern regions. In that regard, as Mr. Ladsous reminded us, the Government is working to facilitate discussions among the parties to the Agreement to appoint the officials of the interim authorities and the transitional electoral colleges. On 20 November 2016, the Government organized peaceful local elections, which were held in 644 of the country's 703 communes. The participation rate for those elections stood at 52.51 per cent, in comparison with 51.39 per cent in 2009 and 48.67 per cent in 2004, which proves that citizens have become more interested in local elections. I commend the assistance provided by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and Operation Bharkane forces to the Malian defence and security forces in the run-up to elections.

The Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission is already operational and it has opened regional offices in all regions of Mali, with the exception of Kidal.

In addition, working alongside MINUSMA, the Government has development criteria and deadlines in order to facilitate an assessment of the progress made by the signatories in the implementation of the Agreement, in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 12 of resolution 2295 (2016), of 29 June 2016. I would like to assure the Council that Malian authorities will fully shoulder their responsibility in implementing those benchmarks, which will provide new momentum to the peace process in Mali.

With regard to the issue of defence and security, during the election period, the Chairs and members of the National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission, the Commission on Integration and the National Council for Security Sector Reform were nominated. The national strategy for the security sector was also developed during that period.

I would like to underscore that the Government of Mali is determined to launch mixed patrols, as we mentioned earlier. Regrettably, that process has not yet started because of the many demands put forward by the other parties to the Agreement, such as, in particular, the request for the adoption of a decree that recognizes the various ranks of those to be included in the mixed patrols prior to their deploymnet. The response to such demands lies in the implementation of the integration programme provided for in the Agreement.

The fragmentation of armed groups is an additional challenge. Mr. Ladsous addressed the rivalry between armed groups, which increases the number of interlocutors and complicates the implementation of the Agreement. That, in turn, has a negative impact on deadlines, which must then be postponed.

In addition to those political and institutional defence and security measures, I would like to emphasize that the Government has continued its development activities on the ground, when security conditions allow, through project and programmes already under way, such as the emergency development programme in the north of the country and the economic recovery and

reconstruction programme. The Government has also developed a specific strategy to develop regions in the north of Mali, which is yet to be approved, and proposed a draft law to create a sustainable development fund aimed at financing that strategy. Once again, we call upon friendly countries and partner organizations that pledged contributions during successive conferences on the development Mali to honour their commitments and assist us in implementing the Agreement.

Efforts to implement the Agreement are ongoing. To build on the progress that I have just mentioned, President Keita, who is fully committed to the process, has decided to make 2017 the year to implement the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali from the Algiers process. In his address to the nation on 31 December 2016, the Head of State announced key measures to restore peace and security and achieve national reconciliation. The President also informed the country that interim authorities would be operational during the first quarter of 2017 in all areas in which it was not possible to hold communal elections. Once concluded, that operation will make it possible to speed up the redeployment of the administration and facilitate the restoration of basic social services. It will also allow for a more efficient return and reintegration of refugees and displaced Malians.

The Head of State also announced the holding of the National Accord Conference to be held in March 2017, in accordance with the provisions of article 5 of the Agreement to create an environment for in-depth discussion among all Malian stakeholders on the root causes of the conflict. The goal of the discussion is to develop a charter for peace, unity and national reconciliation. In that regard, an organizing committee, chaired by a high-ranking Malian official, Mr. Baba Akhib Haidara, as mediator, has been established.

As the Council can see, the actions undertaken and measures announced illustrate the Government's determination, under the leadership of the President, to achieve the effective and comprehensive implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. We call upon all Malian parties to show greater commitment and good faith now that we are at a decisive juncture in achieving peace. Our population, having suffered enough, continues to hope for peace dividends. I invite the international community and the Agreement Monitoring Committee to play their role as guarantors of the commitments made by all the parties, while clearly shouldering their responsibilities, in accordance with the provisions article 54 of the Agreement.

With regard to the implementation of resolution 2295 (2016), I would like to point out that new elements have not yet been implemented on the ground. Once again, therefore, I ask the Security Council once again to provide MINUSMA with the adequate resources to enable to fully discharge its stabilization mandate and assist the Government of Mali in gradually regaining control of the country. That is our desire. We will remain committed as a State and will make every human and material effort necessary to assume our responsibility. The Malian defence and security forces will make the necessary sacrifice. Regrettably, we cannot face the challenges alone; we will need the support and assistance of our partners. But meeting those challenges are ultimately still our responsibility. We recognize that.

I draw the Council's attention to the urgent need to strengthen cooperation on the ground between MINUSMA and the Malian defence and security forces. Efforts are under way but must be enhanced. Today's events recall the need to move even faster because our enemies are also determined to do the same.

The process of cantonment and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, which remains a prerequisite for stabilization in Mali, should be sped up. This is an ideal opportunity for us to thank all partners that took part in the donors DDR round table held on 8 December 2016. I call upon them to honour the agreements they made in order to move this important process forward.

Let me make a few comments on the report of the Secretary-General with regard to the human rights and humanitarian situation. With regard to the human rights situation, the report mentions 104 documented cases of human rights abuses and violations between September and December 2016. That reveals a decline in human rights violations and abuses for the period in question compared to the previous report (S/2016/819), thereby showing a considerable improvement of the human the rights situation in Mali. It is to be noted that the great majority of documented cases are the work of armed or terrorist groups and were committed in areas in which legal or investigative services are essentially lacking because of insecurity. During this period, the Human Rights Division of MINUSMA attributed approximately 10 cases of human rights violations to

Malian authorities because of a lack of prosecution or illegal detention. I can assure the Council that all documented cases were processed in the legal system either through opening an investigation or judicial actions. No one will be allowed to enjoy impunity in Mali.

Concerned with further improving the human rights situation, in November 2016 the Government adopted an ambitious national policy on human rights accompanied by an action plan as well as a law protecting defenders of human rights. In the same vein, the Minister for Justice and Human Rights organized together with the Human Rights Division of MINUSMA, which I would like to thank, a training workshop for Malian judges in Bamako. That kind of training will be extended to other actors within the legal system.

With regard to the humanitarian situation, it should be noted that the Government of Mali carried out several actions in areas affected by the crisis during the period covered by the report. Those actions took the form of distributing food assistance to the populations of the Mopti, Timbuktu, Gao and Kidal regions, as well as to Malian refugees in Burkina Faso, the Niger and Mauritania. The Government also rehabilitated, built and equipped administrative services, health centres, schools and water infrastructure in the Timbuktu, Kidal, Gao, Ménaka and Mopti regions. Similary, within the framework of economic renewal, income-generating actions were financed for the benefit of the displaced and repatriated populations in the Timbuktu, Gao, Kidal, Mopti and Ségou regions. Furthermore, schools were opened in Kidal for the 2016-2017 school year, and the State effectively returned to all regional capitals of the North and the district administrative seats with the exception of Kidal.

The situation in Kidal is of particular concern to the Government of Mali because terrorist groups are trying to establish a safe haven there while they continue their abuse of the civilian population and illicit activities facilitated by the criminal economy. The presence of armed and terrorist groups in the area are an obstacle to providing humanitarian assistance and basic social services. I take this opportunity to call on the international community through you, Sir, to exercise the necessary pressure on all parties in Mali, in particular the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad, to honour their commitments under the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, known as the Algiers Agreement.

In conclusion, I reiterate the thanks of the Government and the people of Mali to the United Nations; the countries and institutions that are members of the Agreement Monitoring Committee; the troop-contributing countries; and the international community, in general, for the sacrifices that they have made in order to permanently and sustainably settle the crisis in Mali. I also pay tribute to all the victims of the crisis: the civilian, military, foreign and Malian victims who have fallen for the cause of Mali, and, with whom I wish to include the victims of this morning's attack in Gao. I also commend the outstanding work of the women and men of MINUSMA and the French Operation Barkhane in the stabilization process of Mali. Today, thanks to their support to Mali's defence and security forces and the enormous sacrifices made by the Government and the people of Mali, our country is progressively returning to stability as was shown by the holding of the twenty-seventh Africa-France summit in Bamako only a few days ago that was unanimously hailed as a success.

Lastly, I wish all the members of the Council a Happy New Year.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Algeria.

Mr. Boukadoum (Algeria): Let me begin by saying that we are deeply shocked by the cowardly, horrendous attack that targeted a site of the Operational Coordination Mechanism. It is no coincidence that the terrorist attack occurred at this time and against Malian forces and elements of the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad (CMA) and the Platform coalition of armed groups, which are all signatories of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. They are being regrouped to train for the long-awaited deployment of the joint patrols. We extend our sincerest condolences to the families of the victims, the Malian authorities represented here by His Excellency Mr. Abdoulaye Diop, Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and African Integration. This attack should be seen as a cruel reminder that our resolve must not waver. On the contrary, our resolve and the support of the Security Council for the implementation of the peace Agreement should further grow.

Let me also add that Sweden has brilliantly begun its mandate in the Security Council with a presidency replete with inspired initiatives. I congratulate the Swedish presidency for everything that it has done in

the Security Council since the beginning of the year and thank it for inviting Algeria to share with members our thoughts concerning the mediation efforts and notably the follow-up of the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, known as the Algiers Agreement, signed more than 18 months ago.

This meeting is a timely opportunity to take stock of all that has been done and all that is being done at this very moment — continuously and intensively — and inform one another on how to impact our common endeavour in the most positive spirit and way. And in that regard, I thank Under-Secretary-General Hervé Ladsous. The ultimate goal is the sustainable establishment of peace and reconciliation in our brotherly country of Mali.

I will begin by underlying several elements that should not to be set aside in difficult times. Everyone, including the Malian authorities and all other parties to the Algiers Agreement, have regularly and constantly — no matter the trying times that we have faced and are facing — stated their complete and unequivocal support and commitment to the full implementation of the Algiers Agreement. It is of the utmost importance that all stakeholders, including the Security Council and the Secretariat, which took full part in the mediation process and are part of the follow-up mechanism, continue to show their vital support and confidence in every circumstance, and, more precisely, to the follow-up mechanism of the Agreement. That particular aspect of the process shows that we are all on board and that we must remain together.

The following are questions that should be asked at this juncture: How can we help parties and stake holders fulfil their obligations under the Algiers Agreement? What kind of positive input can we add for the sake of fulfilling our goals? How can we improve the general atmosphere to be conducive to those goals. Lastly, how can we help the Malian authorities while knowing that delays or power vacuums will be exploited by outcasts and outlaws — as happened earlier this morning — for which not only Malian citizens but also the Blue Helmets of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) are paying too high a price?

I should emphasize once again that the strategic goal — and our very raison d'être — is peace and reconciliation, and that the means to it is mediation. It is true that we have not yet reached that destination, but we cannot and must not give up in the face of the adversities we encounter on the way. We all knew that the task would not be easy and that as time went on and expectations continued unfulfilled, that would fuel the challenges, frustrations and doubts. Clearly, that means that we must work hard to try to achieve our shared goals faster, but at the same time we should be very cautious about any move that could derail a process that has been so difficult to build.

For all those reasons, we believe it is important to be frank about the fact that in the context, it is vital that the Security Council reaffirm its encouragement and support to the Algiers Agreement and the follow-up mechanism. As leader of the mechanism, Algeria will reliably and faithfully relay to the Council whatever action may be considered necessary, including between scheduled meetings. Obviously, we assume that the sustained collaboration and exchanges with the Secretariat and MINUSMA — everyone is on board, as we know — will hold up.

There are clearly obstacles and difficulties to the speedy implementation of what has been agreed to and defined in the Algiers Agreement, and which we and all of the stakeholders have called for. I should note — and Mr. Dior confirmed just now — that the Malian authorities have repeatedly assured us of their willingness to work to achieve it. I should add that so far our impression is that the other Malian parties to the Algiers Agreement are not contesting its implementation. It is therefore crucial that we continue with the persuasion needed to convince and encourage them to stand by their commitment and ensure that they understand that there will be only positive gains if they stick to the wisdom of positive engagement and reconciliation. It is also crucial to ensure that no gaps or misunderstandings that might emerge in the implementation of the Agreement — and such things do naturally occur in complex situations — are used as a pretext either for backing out of or unnecessarily threatening the whole process. No one has the right to put the process at risk through unjustified action or constant questioning of things that have already been fully agreed on.

In that regard, we find it highly commendable that the Malian authorities have agreed that the High Representative of Mali's President Keita should be designated to foster the implementation of the Agreement by chairing an ad hoc committee created by the Comité de suivi de l'accord in order to smooth out the problems raised recently by one of the signatories

to the Agreement. We have high hopes that this recent initiative will help to clear the way for all the other measures to be taken, including disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, joint patrols and, of course, interim administration. We note that the issues that have been raised are about the modalities of the implementation rather than its substance, so we should continue to encourage everyone to act on this in a spirit of good will.

We are also very pleased that the top-level Malian authorities have committed to holding a national reconciliation conference in the near future that would definitely pave the way for full reconciliation. I should point out that reconciliation is Mali's business and it is Malians, using the appropriate mechanisms, who should decide it by and for themselves. Our responsibility and that of the Mechanism, the United Nations and all other stakeholders is solely to stand by them.

Through the way it was conceived — with inclusiveness, international support, commitment on the part of Mali's neighbours and the backing of the African Union and the United Nations — the mediation process has proved its uniqueness and will stand as a role model for other crisis situations. If it is to succeed, is vital to ensure that it is fully supported. Mr. António Guterres, our new Secretary-General, said in his first address to the General Assembly (see A/71/PV.60) that he envisions his efforts to promote prevention and resolve crises as relying on the parties involved and on the help and commitment of neighbouring States and regional mechanisms and organizations.

The peace and reconciliation process in Mali fits that vision exactly. If Mali is to be a success story, it must first be a success story for Malians; then for all Mali's neighbours, including Algeria, because of our naturally interlinked relations; and ultimately for the international community as a whole with, at its heart, the United Nations, which has also invested so much in terms of sacrifices as well as deployment. Needless to say, in a region — the whole of the Sahel and beyond — where terrorism and transnational crime go hand in hand and are growing in size and impact in their pursuit of their evil objectives, failure cannot be an option. It is vital that we restore the legitimate Malian authorities' command over their entire territory, which also requires strengthening Mali's security forces, as well as ensuring reconciliation between all Malians through bold mechanisms that they will freely choose for themselves.

Those are the issues that we wanted to share with the Security Council. As I ask for the Council's renewed support, I would like to assure members that as leader of the follow-up mechanism, Algeria has committed huge human and material resources in the cause of peace and reconciliation in our brotherly neighbour Mali and will not back away from its responsibilities towards all Malians and their leaders. We will always be on their side, because it is the side of righteousness, justice and peace.

The President: I thank Mr. Boukadoum for his briefing.

There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 11.05 a.m.